



Strengthening Women's Rights Advocacy in ASEAN: Policy Alternatives for Regional Integration, Governance and Justice

7-8 November 2017
Sequoia Hotel, Quezon City, Philippines

CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

Through the formal establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community in 2015, ASEAN has become a “full-fledged politically cohesive, economically integrated, socially responsible Community.”¹ This new era of community-building – through deepening ASEAN’s regional integration – is marked by the adoption of the new ASEAN Community 2025 Vision. The direction of the regional integration that characterizes this renewed approach has been criticized as driven mainly by pursuits for accelerated economic growth. This neoliberal approach intensifies poverty and inequalities among and within countries, with particular and differential impact on women and marginalized sectors.

Simultaneously, civil society is observing a rise or re-emergence of authoritarianism in Southeast Asia. In August 2017, to mark ASEAN’s 50th Anniversary of existence, civil society groups who are part of ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) / ASEAN Peoples’ Forum (APF), including women’s networks like Philwomen on ASEAN and Weaving Women’s Voices in Southeast Asia (WEAVE), issued statements raising the issue of increasing authoritarianism in ASEAN and the exclusion of marginalized women in the ASEAN integration.² These and other groups have criticized ASEAN’s prioritization of an economic agenda devoid of concern for human rights, especially women’s rights, and the plight of poor and marginalized women,³ as evidenced in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2025 blueprint and its lack of human rights and women’s rights perspectives.⁴

Women’s participation and engagement in economic policies and official spaces of political discussions such as on authoritarianism have been limited in the ASEAN region. The prevailing discourse and engagement with governments are shaped by the so-called experts, typically economists whose perspectives are not necessarily informed by women’s realities and women’s perspectives. Additionally, women’s groups grapple with the complexity of economic discourse and the lack of attention within regional economic frameworks to their experiences and needs. For instance, Women’s Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB) and Kalyanamitra found that the AEC blueprint “has not made it evident as to how it will facilitate women’s equal access and participation in the project for the large part of its targets.

¹ Remarks of ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh at the 27th ASEAN Summit (November 2015).

² See Marlon Ramos, "Protesters warn of 'rising tide of authoritarianism'", Philippine Daily Inquirer, August 08, 2017. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/921107/protesters-warn-of-rising-tide-of-authoritarianism>; and InterAksyon, "Southeast Asian civil society to ASEAN: 50 years of exclusion is enough," Interaksyon, August 8, 2017. <http://www.interaksyon.com/southeast-asian-civil-society-to-asean-50-years-of-exclusion-is-enough/>

³ See "Women Demand Accountability of ASEAN: End Culture of Impunity" <http://wlbonline.org/women-demand-accountability-of-asean-end-culture-of-impunity/>

⁴ See Women’s Legal and Human Rights Bureau and Kalyanamitra, “Women and the ASEAN 2025: Locating the Gender and Human Rights Dimension of the ASEAN Economic Community,” forthcoming.

There is inadequate attention to the obstacles to women's participation and access to information on its projects."⁵

There is also a gap in terms of adopting an intersectionality lens, as most of ASEAN's economic policies do not take into account the intersectional, diverse and compounded issues and contexts of women and marginalized communities. Cross-movement work is important to enable social movements, women's movements and other sectoral movements to highlight the rights of marginalized women in relation to the economic agenda and the implications of authoritarian regime, such as the possibility of martial law in the Philippines, the prevailing junta military governments in Thailand and Burma, etc.

Women's issues must be at the center of the economic and political agenda of ASEAN and its member states. Central to women's informed and meaningful participation in economic discussions is their enhanced capacity to understand the complex concepts and highly technical language especially in economics. Women's issues must be mainstreamed, integrated and reflected in political and economic policies at the local and ASEAN level.

Women's movements initiating actions, sharing and pooling together resources, and maximizing opportunities and openings are instrumental to creating change – without these, successes in women's rights advocacy would not have been possible. Women need to be front and center in the call for accountability to women's rights in the prevailing neoliberal economic agenda and rising authoritarian regimes of governments in ASEAN.

Objectives of the Regional Forum

To address this context, WEAVE and Regions Refocus, in collaboration with Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research Education in ASEAN/ Southeast Asia (SHAPE-SEA), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, and Gender Transformative and Responsible Agribusiness Investments in South East Asia (GRAISEA) will co-convene a Regional Forum in Manila, Philippines, from 7-8 November 2017. Held just preceding the 31st ASEAN Summit, this Regional Forum will bring together allies from various disciplines: national and sub-national women's human rights organizations, trade unions, migrant, and rural development groups in Southeast Asia, academic and research organizations working on ASEAN, economic policy, and development alternatives.

The forum aims to:

1. Examine the implications of ASEAN Community Vision 2025, national development plans, rising authoritarianism, and the culture of violence and misogyny on women's human rights, particularly marginalized women and sexual violence in Southeast Asia;
2. Articulate a feminist analysis of the ASEAN Economic Community and explore an alternative development agenda for women in Southeast Asia; and
3. Undertake cross-movement discussions and strategize towards potential collaborations among women's and other social movements (labor, rural, peasant, migrant, indigenous, disability, LGBT, etc.) to promote women's rights in ASEAN's agenda and action plans.

⁵ Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau and Kalyanamitra, "Women and the ASEAN 2025: Locating the Gender and Human Rights Dimension of the ASEAN Economic Community"

AGENDA

DAY 1: TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2017

9:00 – 10:00 **Welcome, Objectives, Agenda, and Introductions**

Thida Khus and **Jelen Paclarin**, WEAVE, and **Anita Nayar**, Regions Refocus
3 conveners x 5 min + 45 min all participants = 1 hr

10:00 – 12:30 **Session 1: ASEAN Women's Rights Café Tour**

Join one of four groups to visit four ASEAN cafés for twenty minutes each. At each café, converse on the concerns of marginalized women across South East Asia: a) women with disabilities; b) indigenous women; c) women workers including migrants; and d) rural women. Explore inter-linkages between marginalized women and a) economic policy; b) political authoritarianism; c) culture of misogyny and sexual violence; and d) sexual rights. Each café will have a) a lead discussant to share a kick-off presentation; b) a tour guide to facilitate the conversation; c) a rapporteur; and d) a flip chart to write concerns from your contexts. After the café tour, rapporteurs will share highlights followed by an open forum discussion.

20 min x 4 café stops + 7 min x 4 rapporteurs + 30 min open forum = 2 hr 20 min

Rural Café

Discussant: **Amparo Miciano**, National Rural Women Coalition

Tour Guide: **Rosalinda (Inday) Pineda-Ofreneo**, HomeNet Philippines

Rapporteur: **Jocelyn Villanueva**, Oxfam

Workers Café

Discussant: **Reiko Harima**, Mekong Migrant Network

Tour Guide: **Melisa Serrano**, University of the Philippines

Rapporteur: **Tes Borgoños**, ASEAN Services Employees Trade Union Council

Disabilities Café

Discussant: **Carolyn Dagani**, Philippine Coalition on the UNCRPD

Tour Guide: **Johana Wardhani**, Kalyanamitra

Rapporteur: **Shaira Cruz**, Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau

Indigenous Café

Discussant: (TBC)

Tour Guide: **Panjit Kaewsawang**, Foundation for Women

Rapporteur: **Mary Ann (Meanne) Manahan**, Focus on the Global South

Facilitator: **Thida Khus**, SILAKA

11:15 – 11:30 **Snack** (*served during open forum discussion*)

12:30 – 13:30 **Lunch**

- 13:30 – 15:15 **Session 2: Inter-linkages Between Gender, Trade, Finance, and Investment**
- Engage in an interactive session with lead discussants who will analyze the gendered implications of economic policy (trade, finance, and investment) on marginalized women; agriculture and rural livelihoods; micro, small, and medium enterprises; and public private partnerships. Discussants will also propose alternative economic development policies to address the concerns of marginalized women and sexual violence at regional and national fora, followed by an open forum discussion.
10 min x 5 discussants + 45 min open forum = 1 hr 45 min
- Alternative and Feminist Approaches to Regional Integration – **Marina Durano**, Open Society Foundations;
- Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods – **Connie B. Dacuycuy**, Philippine Institute for Development Studies;
- Commons – **Mary Ann (Meanne) Manahan**, Focus on the Global South;
- Public Private Partnerships – **Nathalie Verceles**, University of the Philippines; and
- WEAVE Analysis of AEC – **Jelen Paclarin**, Women’s Legal & Human Rights Bureau
- Facilitator: **Rosalinda (Inday) Pineda-Ofreneo**, HomeNet Philippines
- 15:15 – 15:30 **Break**
- 15:30 – 17:15 **Session 3: Inter-linkages Between Women’s Marginalization, Economic Policy, Political Authoritarianism, and the Culture of Misogyny and Sexual Violence**
- Engage in an interactive session with lead discussants who will analyze the structural causes of women’s marginalization and offer proposals to address this.
15 min x 4 discussants + 45 min open forum = 1 hr 45 min
- Indigenous Women – **Judy Pasimio**, LILAK;
- Migrant Women – **Usa Lerdsrisuntad**, Foundation for Women;
- Women Workers – **Joanna Bernice Coronacion**, SENTRO; and
- Muslim Women – **Rena Herdiyani**, Kalyanamitra.
- Facilitator: **Maureen Pagaduan**, Women’s Legal and Human Rights Bureau
- 17:15 – 17:30 **Wrap-Up Day 1**

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2017

9:00 – 9:15 **Recap Day 1**

9:15 – 10:45 **Session 4: Women’s Stories In Tableau**

Join one of three groups to prepare a tableau showcasing a story that exemplifies the inter-linkages discussed on Day 1. Each group presents their tableau to all.
45 min group work + 15 min x 3 group tableaus = 1 hr 30 min

Facilitator: **Khun Pring**, SILAKA

10:45 – 11:15 **Break**

11:15 – 13:00 **Session 5: Countering Political Authoritarianism, Sexism, and the Silencing of Women**

Join one of three groups to discuss your experiences or country cases of a) how political authoritarianism and/or economic and social conservatism, perpetuate the culture of misogyny and sexual violence aimed at silencing women; and b) how women/ feminist activists are responding to these threats and engaging or influencing public opinion. Nominate a rapporteur to share highlights of your group exchange with all participants followed by an open forum discussion.
45 min group work + 7 min x 3 group reports + 45 min open forum = 1 hr 45 min

Facilitator: **Nur Judy Abdullah**, Majlis Kesejahteraan Masyarakat

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 15:00 **Session 6: Cross-Sectoral Strategies to Promote Women’s Rights, Particularly of Marginalized Women**

Engage in a roundtable discussion on initiatives and ideas for collaboration across sectors and organizations followed by an open forum discussion.
7 min x 4 discussants + 30 min open forum = 1 hr

Ryan Silverio, ASEAN SOGIE Caucus;

Harpreet Kahlon, SHAPE-SEA;

Natalia Figge, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung; and

Chang Jordan, UN Women.

Facilitator Open Forum: **Anita Nayar**, Regions Refocus

15:00 – 15:30 **Break**

15:30 – 17:30 **Session 7: Strategies to Advance An Alternative Development Agenda with Women’s Rights in ASEAN**

Form three groups to develop priorities and collaborative strategies to advance economic development alternatives, women’s rights advocacy, and marginalized women’s participation in national and regional fora on trade and investment, MSME, agriculture. Nominate a rapporteur to share highlights of your group exchange with all participants followed by an open forum discussion.

45 min group work + 7 min x 3 group reports + 45 min open forum = 2 hr

Facilitator: **Jelen Paclarin** and **Thida Khus**, WEAVE

17:30 – 17:45 **Closing**

Katie Tobin, Regions Refocus and **Usa Lerdsrisuntad**, Foundation for Women

18:00 – 20:00 **Dinner at Ombu Kusina Modern Filipino Restaurant** (GF Sequoia Hotel 91-93 Mother Ignacia St. cor Timog Ave. Quezon City)